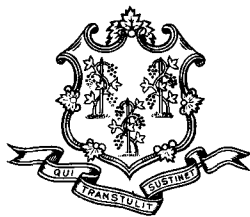


CHESTER BOWLES
GOVERNOR



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HARTFORD

July 12, 1949

Mrs. Albert D. Lasker
Chrysler Building
New York 17, New York

Dear Mrs. Lasker:

I believe you may be interested in a summary of what happened here in Connecticut at the session of our General Assembly which has just closed, and which was my first as Governor.

You may recall that both in my election campaign and in my inaugural message, my major issues and concerns were these: relief of Connecticut's housing shortage through a public housing program and a strong eviction law; broadened labor legislation; greatly increased state aid to education; rebuilding and modernizing of Connecticut's shamefully antiquated firetrap mental hospitals; abolition of segregation in the Connecticut National Guard; and reorganization of the state government.

This was a fairly ambitious program and I expected plenty of opposition. The Senate here had a solid Democratic majority, but, because of Connecticut's notorious "rotten borough" system, the House of Representatives was strongly Republican -- as it has been since the Civil War. Since the House had even contested the election results and only reluctantly admitted that I was Governor, I looked for at least similar reluctance if not outright opposition to my legislative program.

I got both -- and it has been a most illuminating, if heated, session. The heat has been intensified because, traditionally each session of the legislature has been marked by "deals" trading minor court judgeships for legislation. This year we made it clear at the outset that no deals would be considered.

I am glad to say, however, that in spite of the political split in our Assembly, we were able to get a great deal accomplished.

For instance, our new housing program is, I believe, one of the best state programs in the country. It will enable us to build 10,000 new homes in the next two years for rents of about \$42 monthly for a four or four and one-half room home with two bedrooms.

Last year, one out of every eleven tenants in Connecticut was evicted. Our new eviction law, which the Assembly passed early in the session, is, I am told, the strongest in the United States.

We also managed to secure legislation to eliminate notorious pauper clauses in our Old Age Assistance Act and to bring the monthly benefits up to a point where old people can live not only in dignity, but with a decent level of security.

We finally secured the passage of a bill which eliminates segregation from our National Guard and for the first time in Connecticut history, allows every Negro citizen equal rights in the state's military services.

Our mental hospital program was partially successful. The bond issue which was recommended by a non-partisan commission and which I had requested to finance new building of state institutions was cut nearly in half. It is, however, the largest building program in the state's history. We will, for instance, be able to build completely new institutions for our seniles who are now cared for in our mental hospitals and who are the main reason for the tremendous overcrowding.

Finally, the Legislature agreed to set up a commission to study the organization of the State Government which I believe will be the forerunner of a complete and long-overdue reorganization of our costly, antiquated state governmental machinery.

On the other side of the ledger, there are two serious omissions. Somewhat like the Congress in Washington, we were able to secure almost no action on labor legislation. Our unemployment and workmen's compensation laws, as I pointed out to the Legislature, should be broadened and improved in several ways in order to bring them abreast of those now in effect in other progressive states. On this the House of Representatives refused to make any except the most minor changes. This is particularly unfortunate, since Connecticut like all of New England is experiencing heavier unemployment than other regions in the United States, and the resulting decline in purchasing power of workers can have a very serious effect on business and farmers.

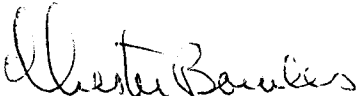
On education, too, we were unable to make much progress. Our birth rate is double that of 1939 and schools are already seriously overcrowded. Without building aid from the state, our local towns will be forced to run double sessions and otherwise lower their education standards within the next few years.

Since our school aid program had the strongest kind of bi-partisan support among Connecticut educators, parent teacher groups, the League of Women Voters and many others, I am somewhat appalled, as well as deeply concerned, over the failure of the House of Representatives to provide adequately for school expansion in the face of clear and urgent need.

We are also left with budget appropriations that, at a conservative estimate, are out of balance by several million dollars.

Although the last six months have been difficult, it has been really a great experience for all of us who have participated in political life for the first time. I feel that, on the whole, the Assembly session has been a reasonably fruitful one. And I believe that one of the most important results has been the renewed active interest of Connecticut citizens in the affairs and actions of their state government. I hope this lively interest will continue and grow even greater. An aroused and vigilant citizenry is certainly the strongest safeguard for democracy.

Sincerely,


Chester Bowles
Governor